

STATEMENT
BY
JOHN T. CONWAY
PRESIDENT
AMERICAN NUCLEAR ENERGY COUNCIL
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR REGULATION
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

APRIL 23, 1979

My name is John T. Conway. I am President of the American Nuclear Energy Council.¹ I am here today in response to a request from your Committee.

As I discussed with Mr. Paul Leventhal of your staff, I am not in a position to discuss the details of the Three Mile Island accident since I have no first-hand knowledge of what took place. I am certain that your Committee, in its investigations, will be looking for facts on which to base your conclusions. The news media have been filled with statements by so-called experts who have no first-hand knowledge of the accident, but who, nonetheless, felt free to make all kinds of statements, allegations and predictions. The public, understandably, has been confused and unnecessarily frightened by so much inaccurate information and unnecessary speculation.

7905140090

The American Nuclear Energy Council -- established in 1975 -- is a nuclear trade association located in Washington, D.C., and it is supported by nuclear steam supply vendors, architect-engineers, nuclear utilities and nuclear fuel and equipment suppliers and others. Currently, more than 100 organizations are members. The Council's principal task is to furnish factual information to the members of the Congress and their staffs, and also to representatives of the Executive Branch of the Government, including members of the White House staff, on the needs and problems of the nuclear industry and in support of our country's nuclear energy programs, in order to help maintain a strong and viable nation.

101 212

T

For example, a number of "experts" with no first-hand knowledge were going before TV cameras to speculate on the large number of cancers that would result. Much coverage was given to these speculative figures. On the other hand, little media coverage has been given to calculations by the official Ad Hoc Interagency Group set up to evaluate the health effects. This group of knowledgeable and qualified individuals, including members from the HEW Center for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration as well as the Environmental Protection Agency and NRC, in their preliminary report issued April 15, have concluded that this accident will not result in even one fatal or one non-fatal cancer among the public. I would recommend this Committee, if it has not already done so, obtain a copy of that report.

I would hope, in the performance of your duties and in the furtherance of your responsibilities, that your Committee and staff will help the public differentiate between fact and fiction - what is known and unknown - and what is speculation, and that in any report that may ensue from your investigation of the Three Mile Island accident, you will clearly identify these differences for the public. If you do this, I believe you will succeed in helping the public have a better understanding of the benefits of nuclear power and its relative risks. More important, you will help the American people to intelligently decide the proper contribution nuclear power can make in solving our nation's future energy problems, for in the final analysis it is they who must make that decision.

In his telegram to me of April 19, Chairman Hart asked that I testify as to the significance, for future regulation of the nuclear industry, of the sequence of events at Three Mile Island.

There is no doubt in my mind, nor do I believe there is any doubt in the minds of other knowledgeable persons in the nuclear industry, that some significant changes will occur once we have had an opportunity to gather all the facts and thoroughly review them.

The Edison Electric Institute - an association of electric companies whose members generate in excess of 77 percent of all electric power in this country - has undertaken a review of the event, including a technical study designed to implement necessary changes in present safety systems and procedures (see attachment 1). This review will augment presently on-going studies initiated by individual electric utilities currently operating nuclear power plants. The Edison Electric Institute has appointed an ad hoc committee of top-level utility executives to oversee and coordinate efforts of the industry to address the impacts resulting from the accident in Pennsylvania. Representatives of public power systems have been asked to participate in the work of this committee and have indicated their intention to do so. In addition, the Electric Power Research Institute, an R&D arm of the electric power industry, has undertaken a detailed technical study of the Three Mile Island accident, and a scientific review by recognized experts not associated with the electric power industry is being established to examine the corrective industry response to the safety reviews relating to Three Mile Island.

These actions by the industry are in addition to its pledge to fully cooperate with the President, the NRC and other government agencies responsible for investigating the accident.

The nuclear industry is most appreciative of the actions taken by President Carter and the White House staff. The visit by President and Mrs. Carter to the site at the Three Mile Island facility on April 1 and subsequent Presidential statements did much to help put the matter in proper perspective, and help alleviate unnecessary fears previously being engendered by irresponsible speculation. The President pointed out that it was too early to make judgements about the lessons to be learned from the nuclear incident, but he assured citizens of Middletown, Pennsylvania and the public at large that there would be a thorough inquiry into the original causes of the events that subsequently occurred.

In his April 5 address to the nation, President Carter noted the concern that the Three Mile Island nuclear accident had caused, and announced the establishment of a fully independent Presidential Commission to investigate: 1) the circumstances leading to the accident and the chain of events as it unfolded; 2) the technical questions which this accident raises concerning the operation of the safety and back-up systems of this plant and design; 3) the nature and adequacy of the response to the accident by all levels of government.

Without doubt, when the Presidential Commission has completed its investigation, coupled with the studies being undertaken by the electric utility industry, the NRC and others, changes will occur in a number of areas, including regulatory activities. Prudence would

dictate that premature actions not be taken until completion and a thorough review is made of these studies, unless, of course, a specific safety problem is uncovered during the course of any of these investigations, at which time, immediate corrective action should be taken.

As your Subcommittee on Nuclear Regulation well knows, there are organizations and individuals in our country that would have our government shut down all nuclear power plants and prohibit all future construction and operation of such plants. Some have testified and submitted testimony to your Subcommittee and other committees of the Congress in the past, and undoubtedly will continue to do so in the future. We are pleased that your Committee and other committees of the Congress that have had an opportunity to hear their testimony and review their submitted data, have wisely not followed their recommendations.

Even though the accident at Three Mile Island and apparent meltdown of a portion of the core did not result in any fatalities or injuries to the employees at the facility or to the public, as many anti-nuclear activists claimed would occur with such an accident, they are attempting to use the Three Mile Island accident as justification to deny our nation the benefits of civilian nuclear power.

In the United States today, we have 70 nuclear power plants in operation with a rated capacity of 51,000 MWe. As President Carter noted in his April 10 new conference, we now derive between 12 and 13 percent of our electric energy in the United States from nuclear power.

The President went on to say, "There is no way for us to abandon the nuclear supply of energy in our country, in the foreseeable future." President Carter reiterated his recognition of the need to speed up the licensing of nuclear plants and said, "I think it does not contribute to safety to have a bureaucratic nightmare or maze of red tape as licensing and siting decisions are made."

We agree and recommend that in evaluating any necessary changes to regulatory activities resulting from lessons learned at Three Mile Island, the Congress recognize the contribution to safety that could result when technical people are permitted to devote their time efficiently to technical matters and be relieved of unnecessary and time-consuming paper studies.

Our installed electric generating capacity from nuclear power today exceeds the entire electric installed capacity as it existed in the U.S. at the end of World War II. It is fortunate, indeed, that this is so when one examines our perilous dependence upon overseas petroleum supplies. Sections of our nation are especially vulnerable to the continued increases in the OPEC oil prices and to the threat of significant curtailment or cut-off of these foreign oil supplies.

In 1978, approximately 17 percent of our electric generation in the United States was from oil-fired facilities. In New York State, however, 44 percent of all electric generation was from oil. New York State was fortunate in that nuclear power plants within the New York Power Pool were able to furnish 18 percent of all electric generation, and thus, save the equivalent of 37 million barrels of oil that otherwise would have been required. The New York Power Pool has calculated that nuclear power

plants in its system saved its customers \$550 million in 1978 - the incremental costs for alternative generation.

During the same year in New England, over 30 percent of Boston Edison's customers' electricity was furnished by the Pilgrim Nuclear Unit. Fuel adjustment charges to its customers would have been 29 percent higher if the electricity had been produced by oil.

In the Midwest, nuclear power supplied 45.4 percent of the electricity generated by the Commonwealth Edison Company, which supplies electricity to Chicago and surrounding areas, with hundreds of millions of dollars savings to its customers.

We live in a world of innumerable risks to each of us as individuals and to the public at large. We as a nation and the entire western world are facing tremendous risks to our economic well-being, not to mention our national security, by our present dependence upon mideast oil. I need not tell this Committee how perilous and tenuous that oil supply line between the western world and Saudi Arabia is, and what the economic and security implications would be were it to be interrupted.

Presently, we have 92 nuclear power plants under construction in the United States, representing 100,000 Mws of additional electric generating capacity. Of those 92 plants, 37 presently are under operating license review. Those plants due to come on the line in the near future, together with our existing 70 nuclear plants, can and will make a significant contribution to this nation in assuring an adequate supply of electricity for our nation in the years to come.

Hardly a week goes by that one or more OPEC nation does not announce an additional increase in the price of its oil. Nuclear plants presently operating and those that will be coming on the line in the near future will help insulate our citizens from the economic consequences of those continuing price increases and help protect us from future oil embargoes directed at the United States for political or other reasons.

Let there be no mistake, those who advocate the shutdown of our operating nuclear power plants and a moratorium on future nuclear power plants are in fact supporting an action that would constitute an unreasonable risk to the health and safety of the people of the United States. Many of those same people who are against the building of nuclear power plants oppose the construction of coal-fired and hydro electric facilities, which are also essential to our nation.

The electric utility industry in the United States has indicated its continued belief in the future of nuclear power. At its annual convention in Atlanta, Georgia on April 9, the Board of Directors of the Edison Electric Institute passed a resolution reaffirming its faith in the safety of nuclear power, and reiterated its determination to utilize every conceivable caution to prevent accidents. The Resolution restated the industry's concern for the public safety and for the production of safe and reliable electric power for the benefit of the public it serves (see attachment 2).

Nuclear power has a safety record second to none. When compared with other alternatives today, and for the foreseeable future,

nuclear power, if not fettered and burdened with additional and unnecessary handicaps - be they technical or political - can and will serve this nation well. Nuclear plants can be and are being operated safely today to the economic advantage of our nation. Their economic advantage will continue to improve in the future as we gain more experience and particularly if fuel oil becomes increasingly expensive as the result of foreign action over which we have no control.

The electric utility industry - both public and private - together with all other segments of the nuclear industry, is prepared to help our country solve our energy crisis by providing a significant portion of the electric needs of our nation in a safe, reliable and environmentally acceptable manner.

ACTIONS OF THE EEI BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGARDING NUCLEAR POWER

April 11, 1979

The Institute

1. Has appointed an ad hoc committee of top-level utility executives that will oversee and coordinate efforts of the industry to address the impacts resulting from the Three Mile Island accident and is inviting representatives of public power systems to participate in the work of this committee.
2. Commended the President for the actions he has taken in appointing a fully independent Presidential Commission to investigate the Three Mile Island accident, offered to cooperate with the President's efforts and those of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to the fullest extent, and is advising the President of the efforts the Institute is undertaking.
3. Endorsed the agreement reached with the management of the Electric Power Research Institute to undertake as expeditiously as possible, with an augmented staff of experts, a detailed technical study of the Three Mile Island accident. The study will include analysis of the specific incident and identification of the generic safety lessons to be learned from it and also provide recommendations resulting from the EPRI study and from reviews by individual electric utility systems.

101 221

4. Will assist the Electric Power Research Institute in raising the necessary funds to finance the technical study described in recommendation No. 3. In providing the assistance to EPRI, Edison Electric Institute will urge all member companies, including those without nuclear programs, to support financially the EPRI effort.
5. It has been agreed that the Electric Power Research Institute will communicate to electric power systems with nuclear programs technical information regarding the Three Mile Island accident which it obtains from General Public Utilities and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
6. Urges each member company with a nuclear power program to continue to give the highest priority to its study of the Three Mile Island accident, to identify the generic lessons to be learned, to implement any necessary changes in safety systems and procedures resulting from this review and make such findings available to EPRI.
7. Through efforts of the ad hoc committee appointed under recommendation No. 1, will establish a scientific review board of knowledgeable and recognized experts not associated with our industry to examine the collective industry response to the safety reviews relating to the Three Mile Island accident, including the study which will be undertaken by EPRI. Representatives of public power will be invited to participate in the selection of this technical review board.

8. Through the efforts of the ad hoc committee appointed under recommendation No. 1, will provide guidance to an augmented nuclear communications program, coordinating the resources of EEI, AIF, ANEC and others, which will meet the challenges of the months ahead.
9. Will communicate its over-all program to the American Public Power Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Atomic Industrial Forum and the American Nuclear Energy Council and urge their support.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, nuclear power remains an irreplaceable component of the nation's electric generation system for the foreseeable future; and

WHEREAS, for three hundred and nine civilian reactor years nuclear power has provided environmentally clean and economically sound electric energy without causing injury or death to a single member of the general public or death by radiation to a single power plant employee; and

WHEREAS, the unfortunate accident at Three Mile Island, while it did not cause a single death or serious injury to the public, has resulted in heightened public concern and doubt as to the safety of nuclear power; and

WHEREAS, this accident proved that the system of redundant safety devices works and does protect the public from harm; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of the Edison Electric Institute, meeting in the City of Atlanta, Georgia, on the ninth day of April, 1979, reaffirms its faith in the safety of nuclear power, reiterates its determination to utilize every conceivable precaution to prevent accidents, restates its concern for the public safety and rededicates itself to the production of safe and reliable electric power for the benefit of all the publics it serves.

101 224